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Letter dated 3 October 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

It is my honour to inform you that on 5 and 6 June 2017, Slovakia held a High-level Conference on the Role of Security Sector Reform in Sustaining Peace, with the support of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. The Conference gathered over 100 participants, as well as representatives of multilateral organizations, including among others, the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the World Bank.

It is my pleasure to present to you the outcome document of the high-level event, which highlights the recommendations that emerged from the deliberations (see annex).

Please allow me to express our sincere gratitude and commend the dedicated work of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and its Security Sector Reform Unit. The Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform, co-chaired by Slovakia and South Africa, remains committed to supporting the United Nations in enhancing its role and approaches to security sector reform.

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34 (a), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Michal **Mlynár**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

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Annex to the letter dated 3 October 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

High-level Conference on the Role of Security Sector Reform in Sustaining Peace: Challenges and Opportunities

Outcome document

1. The High-level Conference on the Role of Security Sector Reform in Sustaining Peace: Challenges and Opportunities, was held on 5 and 6 June 2017, in Bratislava, Slovakia, with the support of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. The conference gathered over 100 participants, as well as representatives of multilateral organizations, including, among others, the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank. The conference was opened by the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Miroslav Lajčák, who stated that it was time to take stock of multilateral approaches to support for security sector reform against the backdrop of recent policy developments in the area of sustaining peace. Moreover, he highlighted that the timing of the conference was opportune given his recent appointment as president of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

2. The present outcome document incorporates key findings and recommendations from the high-level conference. The recommendations emerging from the conference, as well as from the High-level Dialogue on Global Experiences in Security Sector Reform, held in New York in May 2017, and notably the seminar on the nexus between security sector reform, conflict prevention and peace sustainment, co-hosted by Slovakia and South Africa, and the seminar on conflict prevention and peace sustainment on the African continent, co-hosted by Senegal and South Africa, will serve as input to relevant discussions at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

3. The conference had a specific focus on the sustaining peace agenda, which has emerged as a new approach to preventing the outbreak, continuation and recurrence of conflict. The concept recognizes that building peace should not be limited to post-conflict contexts, and that it requires collective efforts across the entire peace continuum. Participants recognized that the two interrelated agendas of sustaining peace and sustainable development (the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) will have far-reaching implications for engagement by the United Nations in the areas of peace and security. While the primary responsibility for driving the efforts to sustain peace lies with national authorities, there are increasing calls to rethink the United Nations approach to supporting these efforts and that of the broader international community. In the spirit of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, cooperation with multilateral organizations is vital to support efforts to prevent the outbreak, escalation and recurrence of conflict.

4. Security sector reform plays an important role in contributing to peace sustainment. As reaffirmed in Security Council resolution 2151 (2014), "an effective, professional and accountable security sector without discrimination and with full respect for human rights and the rule of law is the cornerstone of peace and sustainable development and is important for conflict prevention". The conference reviewed the extent to which multilateral organizations are effectively equipped to deliver support to security sector reform in a way that is able to contribute to sustaining peace. More specifically, the conference sought to examine the role

security sector reform plays across different policy areas related to the success of peace sustainment, in particular, conflict prevention, peacekeeping/stabilization, and sustainable development.

5. To this effect, the conference started with a high-level panel on the role of security sector reform in sustaining peace, which examined the implications of the new sustaining peace agenda for multilateral organizations. Moderated by Ambassador Thomas Guerber of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, the high-level panel included Ambassador Jerry Mathews Matjila, Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, Ambassador Fodé Seck, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations, Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, Secretary-General of OSCE, Alexander Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Ambassador Thomas Greminger, Deputy Director General, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The conference continued with three thematic sessions: a session on security sector reform and peacekeeping/stabilization, which reflected on whether the support of multilateral organizations for security sector reform is appropriately adapted to meet the needs of peacekeeping and stabilization contexts; a second thematic session focused on security sector reform and sustainable development, which examined the opportunities that the 2030 Agenda offers to revitalize international support to security sector reform; and a third thematic session that examined the linkages between security sector reform and prevention and, in particular, the important role that security sector reform can play in preventing violent conflict. A session on sustaining peace through security sector reform was conducted in a round-table format to bring together representatives of multilateral organizations to discuss the main findings emerging through the thematic sessions and to identify concrete recommendations that may be taken forward.

Role of security sector reform support in sustaining peace

6. During the high-level panel on the role of security sector reform in sustaining peace it was recognized that in order for security sector reform support to contribute to the broader objective of peace sustainment, security sector reform needs to be perceived as an integral component of broader institution-building efforts. Security sector reform support therefore needs to be linked to a proper governance framework and a national reform agenda based on a long-term vision. Moreover, it was noted that one of the commonalities between the 2030 Agenda and the sustaining peace agenda is that neither will work if they are not founded on the principle of inclusivity. From a security sector reform perspective, it was recognized that this requires enhanced understanding of the role that the security sector may play in reinforcing tensions among the very population it is meant to protect. Fundamentally, security sector reform needs to be approached as a political process that is inclusive of all national stakeholders.

7. In relation to the thematic session on security sector reform and peacekeeping/stabilization, it was recognized that given the reality that multilateral organizations are often engaged in the same contexts side-by-side, there is a need for predictability in terms of the type of support that each organization will cover. Time is often lost while each organization separately assesses security sector needs, maps what others are doing and identifies a division of labour. It was also highlighted that the broad challenges of peacekeeping are further compounded in so-called "stabilization" contexts, where armed violence is still ongoing and no peace agreement has been achieved.

8. It was noted that in order to strengthen the impact that security sector reform support can have in peacekeeping contexts, there is a need to better integrate security sector reform into broader planning processes and, in particular, to find the right balance between attending to pressing needs without disregarding important long-term goals in planning processes. It was also noted that there is a need to move beyond "train-and-equip" approaches to security assistance that promotes technical modernization while placing effective controls on the use of force. It was recognized that the type of support provided during early stages peacekeeping will have long-term effects on the extent to which security sector reform support will be sustainable.

9. In relation to the thematic session on security sector reform and sustainable development, it was underlined that security sector reform has a vital role to play in contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16, as well as to related goals, such as on gender equality, safer cities and reducing inequalities. Thus, to meet the commitments made in the Sustainable Development Goals, States will need to mainstream good governance, rule of law and respect for human rights throughout the security sector. It was recognized that the 2030 Agenda promotes the understanding that the governance of the security sector is a universal agenda.

10. It was recognized that while security sector reform has the potential to play an important role in advancing the 2030 Agenda, its effective usage as a tool for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals faces a number of challenges. For instance, it is a reality that the work of political, security and development actors in the area of security sector reform often remain siloed, thus limiting opportunities for developing the coherent long-term approaches to support called for in the Sustainable Development Goals. It was noted that there is a need to learn from approaches promoted by the development community for strengthening coordination, such as the "one vision, one plan" approach. In order to strengthen the ability of security sector reform to advance the 2030 Agenda, there is also a need to address a number of issues relating to the lack of comprehensive data to inform adequate analysis of security sector needs, as well as to track progress in reaching security sector governance objectives.

11. In relation to the thematic session on security sector reform and prevention, it was recognized that poor governance of the security sector and its role in committing, or failing to protect the population from, human rights abuses play a role in triggering or prolonging conflicts. It was also highlighted that security sector reform should be seen as a broader confidence-building measure. While security sector reform can contribute to prevention efforts, it was noted there have been few efforts to understand what this means and how it could be achieved. It is expected that the upcoming United Nations and World Bank study on prevention will shed light on how different tools and approaches can contribute to preventing violent conflicts.

12. It was noted that in order to strengthen the preventive effects of security sector reform support, it will be necessary to further reflect on how to build the resilience of the security sector to stand up to anti-democratic forces and to prevent violence from escalating. Security sector reform within the framework of prevention therefore requires strengthening the analysis of potential exclusion generated or maintained by the security sector, and identifying entry points for addressing the issue. Such action requires better understanding of the vulnerabilities of the security sector through appropriate assessments and analysis of conflict drivers. It will also require accepting the fundamentally political nature of security sector reform, through which important questions about power and exclusion and/or inclusion should be addressed at both the national and local levels.

Recommendations

13. A number of recommendations were identified during the conference for strengthening the role of multilateral organizations in security sector reform support as a contribution towards the broader goal of sustaining peace. The recommendations are presented below, grouped according to whether they are context-specific or cross-cutting.

Context-specific recommendations

(a) In the area of peacekeeping/stabilization, there is a need to reflect on what are the minimum standards for security sector reform support. It was noted that an increasing challenge in these contexts is the tendency for international actors to seek quick fixes through "train-and-equip" programmes that are not linked to broader governance objectives. This challenge is further compounded in stabilization contexts where the lack of political settlement and/or ongoing armed fighting makes support to reform efforts very difficult.

- It is recommended that international actors engaged in both stabilization and peacekeeping contexts ensure that "train-and-equip" approaches are not delivered without parallel efforts to strengthen the democratic governance of the security sector.
- It is recommended that international actors identify and prioritize what type of support may feasibly be provided in peacekeeping/stabilization contexts to build the foundations for future reform efforts.

(b) In the area of sustainable development, it was recognized that security sector reform should be seen as an accelerator for the 2030 Agenda. It was noted that the 2030 Agenda provides an important entry point for engaging Governments in dialogue on how to strengthen the governance of the security sector. It was acknowledged that more efforts need to be made to capitalize on this opportunity and to raise awareness about the importance of prioritizing security sector reform as a key component of the 2030 Agenda, in particular Goal 16, which calls for "peaceful and inclusive societies" as well as "effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels", including security and justice institutions. Moreover, it was noted that security sector reform support can contribute to efforts to address bottlenecks and thereby achieve broader development goals.

- It is recommended that further efforts be made to link security sector reform to the broader policy agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals, and in particular, to raise awareness of the role that security sector reform can play as an accelerator for the 2030 Agenda.
- It is recommended that multilateral organizations reflect on how to better mainstream elements of the 2030 Agenda into their security sector reform support, including through the promotion of local approaches to security sector reform and enhanced cooperation across development and security actors.

(c) In the area of prevention, there is a need to enhance reflection on how security sector reform can contribute to prevention efforts. Such action requires a better understanding of the potential role that the security sector may play in reinforcing tensions across the very population it is meant to protect. On the one hand, examining the extent to which the security sector is representative of different ethnic, religious and other groups. On the other hand, it also requires looking at the degree to which legitimate State institutions deliver security to all people, regardless of race, religion or gender.

- It is recommended that further efforts be made to reflect on how security sector reform can contribute to prevention efforts within the framework of broader policy initiatives to strengthen prevention. In particular, calls were made to identify concrete institution-building measures that can contribute to building the resilience of the security sector.

- It is recommended that multilateral organizations better integrate security sector reform into existing conflict analysis tools. Such tools should, among other issues, reflect on the role the security sector may play in contributing to the root drivers of conflict.

Cross-cutting recommendations

(d) Strengthen partnerships among multilateral organizations in support of enhanced predictability on the ground. To contribute to broader efforts to sustain peace, it is important that multilateral organizations engaged in security sector reform support can rapidly map the situation on the ground, identify gaps in support and agree on roles and responsibilities according to a shared understanding of comparative advantages. It was recognized that effective partnerships are necessary to meet those requirements. In practice, however, it was noted that such cooperation often does not take place until actors are deployed on the ground and it is too late to realign resources.

- It is recommended that multilateral organizations reflect on how to ensure early cooperation, before it is too late to realign support, which requires engaging in gap analysis to identify what is already being done by partners and what remains to be done.

- It is recommended that international coordination in the area of security sector reform move towards coordination approaches such as those that have been used in other sectors, including development.

- It is recommended that principles for bilateral and multilateral assistance to security sector reform be developed so that they are in line with broader principles of aid effectiveness.

(e) Strengthen partnerships among multilateral organizations in support of learning lessons. Empirical research is vital to better understand what is working, what is not working and what measures need to be taken to enhance the delivery of international security sector reform support on the ground. It was recognized that more efforts are required to invest in research, analysis and the development of strategic guidance. It was noted that partnerships should be strengthened among multilateral organizations with the aim of sharing experiences and good practice.

- It is recommended that more efforts be made to engage in empirically-based research and to ensure that emerging lessons are shared and discussed across multilateral organizations through dedicated meetings.

- It is recommended that a collective overview of available security sector reform-related guidance be shared among multilateral organizations.

(f) Strengthen multilateral organizations' approaches to planning for security sector reform support. It was underlined that a common challenge for multilateral organizations is to effectively integrate security sector reform into broader planning processes. In particular, planning often focuses on immediate needs without taking into account the need to plan for long-term needs. In the context of peacekeeping, another challenge identified is that, in practice, efforts are made to ensure that all main topics are addressed in assessments, which often leads to overloading mandates with competing tasks, without clear priorities. It was underlined that

effective partnerships for security sector reform support require enhanced efforts to jointly assess and prioritize needs as well as a commitment to adapting support accordingly.

- It is recommended that multilateral organizations engage where possible in joint security sector reform assessments, and that the findings from those assessments are jointly analysed and acted upon.
- It is recommended that efforts be made to identify both immediate and longer-term needs which are in line with broader national goals, and to appropriately prioritize such needs.
- It is recommended that, where obstacles to cooperation exist between multilateral organizations, such as incompatible timelines and processes, that those be addressed through established coordination mechanisms at the highest level.

(g) Identify approaches to harness necessary expertise for security sector reform support. It was underlined that while multilateral organizations have developed security sector reform-related capacities at both headquarters and in the field, many challenges remain in the ability to leverage the expertise required at the necessary moment. In particular, it was noted that with the fast-changing needs on the ground, it is no longer possible to host all necessary expertise within an organization. Moreover, the specialized experts required for different areas of security sector reform support are often not available. It was recognized that there will increasingly be a need to rely on external capacities, which can be provided through partnerships as well as the establishment of rosters.

- It is recommended that partnerships across security, development and human rights actors be strengthened to enable better sharing of expertise. For instance, development actors can contribute expertise in the broader area of public administration reform, while human rights actors can provide knowledge on root drivers of conflict related to social and political exclusion, human rights violations and discrimination. More efforts are required to connect those actors to one another and ensure that they are working towards a common goal.
- It is recommended that efforts be made to invest in the further development and usage of rosters. While rosters already exist, or are in the process of being created, there is a need to ensure that there are mechanisms for sharing information across multilateral organizations.

(h) Promote inclusive approaches to security sector reform support as called for in the 2030 Agenda and sustaining peace agenda. One of the commonalities between the 2030 Agenda and the sustaining peace agenda is that neither one will work if it is not founded on the principle of inclusivity. It was recognized that this requires inclusive approaches to security sector reform support that includes both men and women and engaging with stakeholders at both the national and local levels. More broadly, it was recognized that this also requires engaging with non-State actors, in particular customary and traditional actors. It was acknowledged that while multilateral organizations are by definition State-based, they need to find ways to overcome challenges in engaging with non-State actors.

- It is recommended that assessments examine the extent to which the security sector is representative of different ethnic, religious and other groups. This also requires looking at the degree to which legitimate State institutions deliver security to all people, regardless of race, religion or gender.

- It is recommended that multilateral organizations seek to identify approaches to engage more with non-State actors as appropriate. Many of the security threats being faced require engaging with non-State actors. Moreover, there are many customary and traditional institutions that are able to support the delivery of security to the population and continue to function, even in fragile contexts. There is therefore a need to overcome the friction between the legitimacy of traditional institutions and the legality of State-based institutions.

(i) Promote security sector reform as part of broader institution-building. It was recognized that security sector reform should be understood as an integral part of broader institution-building, which takes place on an ongoing basis in all countries. There has been an increasing tendency to focus on short-term measures, such as train-and-equip programmes, that do not build the foundations for an effective and accountable security sector. There were strong calls to link security sector reform to broader public administration reform efforts, such as public expenditure reviews, in order to contribute to the sustainability of reform efforts.

- It is recommended that support to security sector reform, as part of broader institution-building, be strengthened through dedicated support programmes across all contexts, as relevant, including peacekeeping.

- It is recommended that efforts be made to secure funding for institution-building efforts that require sustained commitment, as well as to build partnerships across security and development actors on this issue.

(j) Raise understanding among Member States about the long-term nature of security sector reform. It was recognized that security sector reform is a generational process that cannot fit into short timelines. While Member States have a responsibility to hold multilateral organizations to account for progress made, it must be recognized that room should also be given to those organizations to invest in supporting long-term nationally-driven processes, which may not always deliver immediate tangible outcomes in the short-term. A balance needs to be found between the need to strengthen accountability through enhanced monitoring and evaluation and the need to factor in the long-term nature of security sector reform.

- It is recommended that Member States recognize the long-term nature of security sector reform support and that, while enhanced monitoring and evaluation should be promoted, there is a need to also acknowledge that important longer-term results may take time to materialize.

- It is recommended that Member States support long-term approaches to security sector reform based on predictable funding, including through trust funds. Calls were also made to strengthen the capacity of the secretariat of the United Nations Inter-Agency Security Sector Reform Task Force, which plays an important coordinating role in the United Nations system.

Way ahead

14. The present outcome document will be distributed to the respective Group of Friends of security sector reform in New York and OSCE in Vienna and other multilateral organizations, including the European Union, OECD, World Bank and others. It will serve as a contribution to efforts to further anchor the security sector reform agenda in multilateral forums and to enhance the effectivity and sustainability of international support to security sector reform.